

# CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS



Adams County  
Soil & Water Conservation District

Adams County Soil & Water Conservation District Newsletter

Spring 2018

Soil health is the continued capacity of a soil to function as a vital, living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Only living things can have “health”, so viewing soil as a living, breathing ecosystem reflects a shift in the way we view and manage our soils in Adams County. Soil is not a lethargic growing medium. Actually, it is rather the home of billions of bacteria, fungi, and other organisms that together create a complex and detailed ecosystem. This ecosystem can be managed to support plants and animals, by cycling nutrients, absorbing, draining and retaining rainwater and snowmelt for use during dry periods, filtering and buffering water to remove potential pollutants, and providing habitat for the soil biological population to flourish and diversity to keep the ecosystem functioning well.

Healthy and functioning soils are able to:

- ◆ Cycle nutrients effectively
- ◆ Store carbon and nutrients in soil organic matter
- ◆ Provide good aeration to promote root growth
- ◆ Improve farm and ranch resiliency and profitability
- ◆ Improve yield stability
- ◆ Reduce runoff and erosion
- ◆ Improve water storage while also protecting water quality
- ◆ Be resilient to drought, heavy rainfall events, and temperature extreme.
- ◆ Reduce disease and pest problems.

It is important to look at the whole picture and system. Research and see which combination of best management practices work best for your soil and to keep our waters clean.



# Gypsum/Soil Health Meeting



Photo Courtesy of NRCS Photo Gallery

**June 27, 2018  
9:30am-12:30pm**

**Montpelier Civic Center  
339 S Main St  
Montpelier, IN 47359**

## Speakers

**Dr. James Camberato**—  
Purdue University, Professor of  
Agronomy and Extension Specialist

**Stephanie McLain**—  
Natural Resources Conservation  
Service, State Soil Health Specialist

**Tony Bailey**— Natural Resources  
Conservation Service,  
State Conservationist Agronomist



Adams, Blackford, Jay & Wells County  
Soil & Water Conservation Districts



## Topics

This meeting will focus on gypsum.  
Discussion will be on how to use this  
product, pro's and con's , and how it  
relates to the overall health of our  
soil and water.

Cost share programs for gypsum and  
cover crops will be highlighted.

**Please RSVP to Tim Kroeker at:  
260-766-1104 or  
timkroeker7@gmail.com**

**PURDUE**  
EXTENSION

**LOCAL FACES**  
COUNTLESS CONNECTIONS

Light refreshments will be provided.

USDA and it's partners are equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.



# Stone Lab Bus Trip

September 10, 2018

Would you like to learn more about the Western Lake Erie Basin. How is Adams County, Indiana tied to Canada?

Come with us on Monday, September 10, 2018 to Lake Erie. The fee is \$15 a person for this adult geared educational trip. The fee will cover a science cruise on Lake Erie, island transportation, visit to the OSU water quality lab, presentations by OSU professor, lunch, chartered bus transportation, ferry ride to/from island, and a light supper.

What is Stone Lab? Established in 1895, Stone Laboratory is the oldest freshwater biological field station in the United States and the center of Ohio State University's teaching and research of Lake Erie. The lab serves as a base for more than 65 researchers from 12 agencies and academic institutions, all working year-round to solve the most pressing problems facing the Great Lakes, such as invasive species and toxic algal blooms. This is your opportunity to learn about some of the valuable programs and projects that are happening in the **Western Lake Erie Basin** in which Adams County is located.

This trip will also provide you with a hands-on experience to gain an understanding of how Best Management Practices can benefit your community. As well as, how your support and promotion of these programs can benefit both the urban and agricultural environment. A cruise on OSU's research vessels will showcase the work that the scientists do daily. All of the activities will be done as a group. The tickets and appointments have been pre-purchased and scheduled to allow you to enjoy the day.

There are limited tickets available for this trip. Contact the Adams Co. SWCD office soon to register and save your spot. Also, you can go to our website: [www.AdamsCountySoilandWater.com/](http://www.AdamsCountySoilandWater.com/) to download a registration form.





# **USDA Resumes Continuous Conservation Reserve Program Enrollment**

*One-Year Extension Available to Holders of Many Expiring Contracts through Continuous Signup*  
As part of a 33-year effort to protect sensitive lands and improve water quality and wildlife habitat on private lands, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will resume accepting applications for the voluntary Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Eligible farmers, ranchers, and private landowners can sign up at their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office between June 4 and Aug. 17, 2018.

FSA stopped accepting applications last fall for the CRP continuous signup (excluding applications for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and CRP grasslands). This pause allowed USDA to review available acres and avoid exceeding the 24 million-acre CRP cap set by the 2014 Farm Bill. New limited practice availability and short sign up period helps ensure that landowners with the most sensitive acreage will enroll in the program and avoid unintended competition with new and beginning farmers seeking leases. CRP enrollment currently is about 22.7 million acres.

## **2018 Signup for CRP**

For this year's signup, limited priority practices are available for continuous enrollment. They include grassed waterways, filter strips, riparian buffers, wetland restoration and others.

FSA will use updated soil rental rates to make annual rental payments, reflecting current values. It will not offer incentive payments as part of the new signup.

USDA will not open a general signup this year, however, a one-year extension will be offered to existing CRP participants with expiring CRP contracts of 14 years or less. Producers eligible for an extension will receive a letter with more information.

## **CRP Grasslands**

Additionally, FSA established new ranking criteria for CRP Grasslands. To guarantee all CRP grasslands offers are treated equally, applicants who previously applied will be asked to reapply using the new ranking criteria. Producers with pending applications will receive a letter providing the options.

## **About CRP**

In return for enrolling land in CRP, USDA, through FSA on behalf of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC), provides participants with annual rental payments and cost-share assistance. Landowners enter into contracts that last between 10 and 15 years. CRP pays producers who remove sensitive lands from production and plant certain grasses, shrubs and trees that improve water quality, prevent soil erosion and increase wildlife habitat.

The new changes to CRP do not impact the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, a related program offered by CCC and state partners.

Producers wanting to apply for the CRP continuous signup or CRP grasslands should contact their USDA service center. To locate your local FSA office, visit <https://www.farmers.gov>. More information on CRP can be found at [www.fsa.usda.gov/crp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp).



Would you like possible **funding help with *Cover Crops* or *Gypsum***? Do you farm in the Upper Wabash Watershed in Adams County? If so, come talk to Sandy about our cost share program. Adams County SWCD partnered with Wells, Blackford and Jay Counties SWCD and was awarded with a Clean Water Indiana grant. Let's talk and see how we can work together to provide conservation practices in Adams County. Having Healthy Soils and Clean Water are two important goals for Adams County.

## Upcoming Conservation Happenings



- ⇒ InField Advantage; June 26th last day to sign up your corn fields.
- ⇒ Gypsum/Soil Health Meeting; June 27th at 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.; Montpelier Civic Center at 339 S. Main St., Montpelier, IN. Fee: \$0. Speaker line-up: Dr. James Camberato, Stephanie McLain, and Tony Bailey. This is an indoor event. Hosted by: Adams, Blackford, Jay, and Wells Counties Soil & Water Conservation Districts.
- ⇒ CRP (Conservation Reserve Program) sign up until August 17th. Contact FSA (Farm Service Agency) for details.
- ⇒ Watch for details about upcoming pasture walks later this summer and early fall. If you are interested in hosting a Pasture Walk, please contact our office.
- ⇒ River Friendly Farmer Award Ceremony; August 15th; 4-H Exhibitors Hall (2nd floor) at the Indiana State Fairgrounds.
- ⇒ Field Day: Digging Deeper; September 5th; Farm of Mike Werling, Decatur, IN. PARP will be offered. Topics: Soil Pit, Equipment Demo, Pest Management, Soil Health, Cover Crops, 4Rs, Farmer Panel.
- ⇒ Explore the WLEB with us. Bus trip to Stone Lab; September 10th. Hosted by Adams Co. SWCD. Registration is in this newsletter. Send in your registration with payment to our office to reserve your seat.
- ⇒ Adams Co. SWCD Tree Sale and Fish Sale coming this fall
- ⇒ Cover Crop Dig; Johnson Farm; Fall 2018
- ⇒ For more upcoming events and information, visit our website at [www.AdamsCountySoilandWater.com/](http://www.AdamsCountySoilandWater.com/) and our Facebook page.



## For Rent

### 7' Esch No-till Drill Model 5507

- ◆ This equipment is good to plant small grain and grass seed.
- ◆ 2 Seed Boxes
- ◆ 15 Openers
- ◆ 5.5" Row Spacing
- ◆ 6'10" Planting Width
- ◆ 9'4" Transport Width
- ◆ Gas Engine & Hydraulics
- ◆ Weights & Lights
- ◆ \$5 an acre/\$25 min

### New! Land Pride 706NT Series No-till Compact Drill 7' Width

- 10 rows, 7.5" row spacing, 2x13 single press wheels
- 5/8" turbo coulters, standard tongue, clevis hitch
- 2 Seed Boxes
- \$8 an acre/\$50 min



**Esch No-till Drill**



**Land Pride No-till Drill**



# For Rent

## BETTERWAY HI-BOY SEED SPREADER

- Pulls with a single horse
- Broadcast cover crops
- \$4 an acre/\$40 min.

## Salford 522 Air Drill

- ◆ 30 ' wide
- ◆ Capable of seeding cover crops and injecting dry fertilizer in the same pass.
- ◆ Provided by collaboration of Adams SWCD and Allen SWCD.
- ◆ Go to Adams Co. SWCD Facebook page for mini video about information on Salford drill.
- ◆ The regular rental price is \$30. This includes drill, tractor, & operator.  
**SPECIAL RATE:**  
**\$16/acre or \$15/acre if the invoice is paid within 10 days.**



**Betterway Hi-Boy Seed Spreader**



**Salford 522 Air Drill**

# Indiana NRCS Accepting Applications for Easement Programs

Acting State Conservationist Gerald Roach recently announced that Indiana's USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is accepting applications for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP). ACEP restores and protects Indiana's critical wetlands and grasslands which helps productive farms remain in agriculture and provides important habitat for wildlife and plant species. Applications are due on or before August 17<sup>th</sup> to be considered for the 2019 fiscal year of funding that starts October 1, 2018.

"Conservation easements are an important tool to help landowners and partners achieve their goals to protect their land for future generations," commented Roach. "This deadline is several months earlier than NRCS typically accepts applications, and interested applicants are encouraged to not miss the deadline," he added.

NRCS easement programs have been a critical tool in recent years for advancing conservation on private lands. In FY 2017, Indiana NRCS allocated \$11.1 million in ACEP funding to enroll 2,960 acres of wetland and farmland in conservation easements. According to Roach over 75,000 acres in the state have now been enrolled through NRCS.

Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE) have many environmental benefits including reduced impacts from flooding, recharged groundwater, and improved wildlife habitat, along with many recreational and educational opportunities. Participants may choose either a permanent or 30-year easement to work with NRCS to restore, protect and enhance their wetlands.

ACEP's Agricultural Land Easements (ALE) not only protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing the conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses, but they also support environmental quality, historic preservation, wildlife habitat and protection of open space. A key component under the agricultural land easement is the "grasslands of special environmental significance," which protects high-quality grasslands that are under threat of conversion to cropping, urban development and other non-grazing uses. State and local governments, not for profits and land trusts that have farmland or grassland protection programs are eligible to partner with NRCS to purchase these conservation easements.

"NRCS helps guide landowners throughout each step of the easement process," said Roach. "We provide technical expertise, conservation planning and financial assistance."

NRCS accepts applications at any time throughout the year; however, applications for the next funding round must be submitted on or before August 17, 2018.

To learn about ACEP and other technical and financial assistance available through Indiana NRCS conservation programs, visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted) or contact your district conservationist <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/contact/local/>.

For more information about easements in Indiana, visit: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/in/programs/easements/>





Deadlines for **registration for INfield Advantage is June 26th**. Your INfield Advantage Grower Enrollment Form is due to the Adams Co. SWCD by this date.

INfield Advantage provides you the opportunity to gather and analyze personalized, field-specific data. It provides participants access to tools to collect on-farm data, allowing participants to get numerous farm variables and inputs, including crop nutrients. Corn stalk nitrate testing (CSNT) shows and determines nitrogen use efficiency at the end of the growing period. Through peer-to-peer group discussion and local aggregated results, Infield Advantage's tool helps you understand and evaluate unbiased, individualized data. Finding the balance between economic viability and environmentally friendly is a challenge that farmers face each growing season. The Infield Advantage combines locally sourced data, innovative ag technologies and farmer-to-farmer discussion so participants can make personalized best management decisions for their farms and their bottom lines. Aerial photography is taken of selected points of your field to help with the analysis.



Joe Schmees began his new position as Executive Director of the Indiana Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts on May 14. He is looking forward to meeting the many partners who make up the conservation partnership around the state. Joe's passion for land and water began as early as middle school when he studied and wrote a paper on the Dust Bowl. He realized then that we have an awesome responsibility to take action and prevent that kind of devastation from ever happening again. Joe appreciates that he's in a position now to collaborate with the 92 Indiana Soil & Water Conservation Districts and the many partners across the state working to protect our natural resources. He states, "The whole concept of conservation makes me feel good because I've had a strong draw to land and water since I was a child and doing this work makes me feel a part of something bigger, something that we're leaving behind for people like my daughter."



*"It's HOT outside!"*....was Not being said at the CWI field day held at the D&J Tonner Farm outside Berne, Indiana on March 14, 2018 as the snow fell. We appreciate Dean and Julie opening up their farm to provide

an educational opportunity for our area. It was a well attended event with a chance to learn the benefits of growing soil biology and a cover crop dig was held. Even with snow covered ground we saw first-hand the benefits of cover crops. Purdue Extension provided PARP training. SWCD, NRCS, and ISDA shared programs and resources available to our community. It was a great day to learn about healthy soils and how it protects our water.















Water Sheds: Our Water, Our Home



Margaret Eicher 2018









ZURCHER'S BEST ONE TIRE & AUTO CARE  
AFFOLDER IMPLEMENT SALES  
FLEMING EXCAVATING, INC.  
DECATUR ROTARY CLUB  
MILLER LAND SURVEYING  
LEHMAN FEED MILL, INC.  
DECATUR DENTAL SERVICES  
ADAMS CO CROPS COMMITTEE  
HARVESTLAND CO-OP  
GENE & MERRYL WITTE

**Thank you!!**  
to the many  
sponsors,  
conservationists  
and facilitators that  
supported  
**Splash 2018**





# Grazing Bites

I am running a bit late this month. What can I say; busy times. May was a very interesting month. Forages went from barely growing, to boot stage, to seed production in what it seemed about ten days. I don't believe I've ever seen forages jump quite like this. We were shy on growing degree days up to that point, then with ample sunshine and some heat, there was "compensatory" growth.

Forages were stressed this spring. Though I have seen some really nice pastures and hay fields this year, those numerous cloudy and cool days earlier this year have played a bit of a toll on yield. Quite a bit of first cutting hay was not the quality it usually is. When grass especially is stressed, its first defense or survival mechanism is usually to produce seed.

This super fast need to produce seed possibly makes leaf production play second fiddle. Will it catch up? Will it make up this production? Good questions. The answer, which always seems to include "it depends" is somewhat dependent on factors, such as moisture, fertility and management.

Most of Indiana has received some greatly needed rainfall. Small portions of the state were already under the "abnormally dry" drought monitor status category. Restoring moisture reserves and then maintaining them, can certainly lend to increased forage production. We can help by not overgrazing and maintaining good soil cover to reduce evaporation and increase infiltration when it does rain.

Adequate fertility is always a good thing. That doesn't necessarily mean that you need to apply a lot of commercial fertilizer, but when nutrients are sufficient or better, you are more likely to have optimal yields if all other conditions are favorable.

Managing grazing livestock to ensure the likelihood of nutrient cycling for future growth is a good place to start. Livestock can move nutrients. The bigger the pasture or allotment, the higher the chance of movement. If water, mineral or shade (as summer progresses) is a distance from where animals are grazing, the greater the possibility that nutrients will be harvested and deposited where they are less needed.

Back to fertilizing, with slightly reduced yields early this year, there may be some advantages to applying a little nitrogen now to help boost growth. I would still limit the amount, especially in pastures where ample legumes are desired. Too much nitrogen can create a lot of competition for legumes from fast grass growth. Don't forget, fertility for macro nutrients should be based on soil tests or at least it is a good place to start.

Lastly, forage management absolutely has an impact on production. To achieve all potential growth, you do need to manage and maintain a good solar panel. You want as much sunlight on the plant's solar "collectors" as possible for maximum production. That means you need to maintain sufficient green leaf area and that will be a challenging feat this year due to the forage maturing rapidly. Generally, I'm not a huge advocate of clipping, at least not to the degree of some, unless it is needed to serve a good purpose and not solely for aesthetics. A good reason would include weed control and this year it would likely be for vegetative management.

With the fast maturing growth, it will be very difficult to stay ahead of the forages. If you want to emphasize regrowth and production, you may need to clip some of the pastures to try and set back seed head production and maintain the forage in a more vegetative stage, which is more ideal for solar collecting. This also helps to shift energy from seed production back to leaf production. Letting plants mature increases root growth and in the long run, the soil's organic matter. You don't want to slow this process of root growth too much, so you will need to continue to maintain adequate stop-grazing heights and clip no lower than needed to encourage the plant to remain more vegetative.

I usually think of June as the month to judge stocking rates. If there is an over abundance of pasture forage that has not been grazed or even top grazed, then you may be slightly understocked unless you are planning for a lot of stockpiled forage. If you are already short of forage and any pastures appear to be overgrazed, then most likely you are overstocked and the rest of the growing/grazing season will be challenging. It will be harder to judge this year due to some reduced early growth and the inability to accurately account for potential growth for the remaining season. By mid-June, we normally have achieved about two-thirds of our potential forage growth and we have not accomplished that yet or at least I hope we haven't.

Hay production is quite often the first thing that comes to mind for most producers in this situation, especially in a closed system where hay is often harvested off some pasture acres. Hay removal means nutrient removal, increased evaporation and quite often slower regrowth particularly when dry afterwards. Fertility will need to be checked this year to boost post hay forage growth. It would be advantageous to not mow too close unless conditions are favorable for fast regrowth or second cuttings and/or post grazing may be more challenging and limited unless moisture and fertility can be maintained.

I recently had a conversation pertaining to forage quality of hay pre or post our recent rains. Everyone needs a certain amount of hay because it is good insurance and usually needed for most systems. I also believe that when opportunity lends itself, *make hay while the sun shines!* So, would there be a difference in the analysis of hay cut early under dry conditions compared to cutting post a rainfall? If all factors such as forage species, varieties, fertility, and hay production are the same, there may not be a lot of difference, except for the fact that the forage is maturing exponentially fast and of which can quickly effect total digestible nutrients and there is a good chance that being under drier conditions earlier may have induced slightly higher brix due mainly to less water, slightly higher concentrations of nutrients including carbohydrates, protein, and lipids.

*Keep on grazing!* Victor Shelton    NRCS State Agronomist/Grazing Specialist



# Contact Us

(260) 724-4124, ext. 3

[www.AdamsCountySoilandWater.com/](http://www.AdamsCountySoilandWater.com/)



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## Adams County Soil & Water Conservation District Board:

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